# Maternity and Neonatal eHandbook Expert Working Groups

## Terms of reference

### Evidence Team

### Background

#### Organisational context

Safer Care Victoria (SCV) is the peak state authority for leading quality and safety improvement in healthcare. Safer Care Victoria oversees and supports health services to provide safe, high-quality care to patients every time, everywhere. Created in response to the recommendations within the report [*Targeting Zero: the review of hospital safety and quality assurance in Victoria*](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/publications/targeting-zero-review-hospital-safety-and-quality-assurance-victoria)*,* SCV works to eliminate avoidable harm and strengthen quality of care.

Staffed and led by clinicians and researchers, SCV puts patient safety front and centre, supporting health services to provide the safest and best possible care to patients, every time.

#### The Victorian Maternity and Neonatal eHandbooks (eHandbooks)

The Victorian Neonatal eHandbook was handed over to SCV upon the agency's establishment in 2017. In 2018, an accompanying Victorian Maternity eHandbook was also created.

In April 2023, Victoria’s Chief Quality and Safety Officer (CQSO) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of SCV tasked the Guidance Team in SCV, with reviewing and updating the eHandbooks as a priority project.

## Role

The purpose of the Expert Working Groups (EWGs) is to develop high quality, contemporary, evidence-based clinical guidelines for the eHandbooks.

## Meeting objectives

The objectives of the meetings are to:

* Discuss SCV and sector priority eHandbook guidelines that require updating
* Distribute work amongst the EWG members
* Align decisions and activities undertaken by the EWG group to the best available evidence and research, and through communication, collaboration, and consensus with stakeholders
* Develop consensus statements where evidence is lacking or equivocal
* Identify and respond to emerging issues that are raised through the membership, SCV Senior Leadership Team (SLT), the governance committee and other forums

## Operating Principles

The eHandbooks EWGs report through the Chair who is accountable to the director, Safety Insights Program, SCV.

The eHandbooks EWGs will:

* Act in the best interests of consumers and the wider Victorian community
* Ensure consumers/First Nations people participate in a meaningful way (with an emphasis on co-design) in all activities of the governance committee, including decision making
* Work with SCV and the EWG’s in a bottom-up approach to agree on strategic objectives and priorities focused on improving outcomes for women, babies, and their families.
* Actively seek opportunities to enhance clinician and consumer engagement, focusing on promoting participation and effective communication
* Provide advice to SCV and the department more broadly on any eHandbook project issues, including at short notice, if required. In formulating its advice, the governance committee should seek further expert input from the EWG’s or externally, as appropriate
* Monitor delivery against each guideline’s timeline and regularly review progress in achieving the project’s milestones
* Be accountable to the director of Safety Insights program and eHandbooks Governance Committee for delivery against each guideline timeline.

## Membership and Responsibilities

####  The eHandbooks EWGs responsibilities

The eHandbooks EWGs will be responsible for:

* The updating, development and implementation of evidence-based maternity and neonatal guidelines and any associated documentation.
* Collaborating with SCV to deliver the milestones and deliverables stipulated in the eHandbooks project plan
* Advising SCV on clinical quality and the safety implications of guidelines, planning and funding decisions in relation to the eHandbooks.

#### Membership

The EWGs will comprise of clinicians and consumers/First Nations people, who will bring their perspective of frontline service delivery and lived experience. EWG members are non-representative; that is, they do not represent an entity, organisation, or any vested interests. The EWG will have, as a guide, no fewer than six and no greater than 10 members. Membership will be multi-disciplinary and, where possible, include at least one member representing each core area below:

#### Maternity eHandbook EWG membership

* Obstetricians
* Midwives
* Consumer representative(s)
* First Nations representative(s)

#### Neonatal eHandbook EWG membership

* Paediatricians/Neonatologists
* Paediatric/Neonatal nurses
* Consumer representative(s)
* First Nations representative(s)

Having consumer members representatives and First Nations representation on the EWGs is mandatory. A minimum of two consumer members is recommended. There may be a preference for making a distinction between consumer representation and carer representation if this is considered appropriate.

The project team manager will attend all meetings and will contribute to discussions in an impartial manner, although is not a formal voting member of the group. The project team manager will bring to the attention of the group any issues or information to inform group deliberations. The project team manager attendance may be delegated to another staff member of SCV if required. Guidance team member(s) will also attend governance meetings, to present final draft guidelines for endorsement.

The director, Safety Insights Program and the state maternity advisor will have a standing invitation to attend all meetings, as an impartial participant, non-voting participant.

The Chair may invite additional guests to take part in meetings, as appropriate. Guest participants will not have authority to vote and will be required to sign confidentiality agreements prior to the meeting.

EWG members will cease to be a member of the EWGs if they:

* resign from the group
* fail to attend three consecutive meetings without providing notice to the chair
* resign from their employment
* breach confidentiality

#### Expectation of Members

Members are responsible for:

* conducting evidence reviews for the subject matter of eHandbook guidelines
* creating evidence tables to inform eHandbook guidelines
* reviewing existing eHandbook guidelines for currency and accuracy
* updating eHandbook guidelines to bring them in line with the current evidence base
* working collaboratively with other members of the EWG to ensure the breadth of experience represented in the membership is fully utilised
* actioning the allocated meeting task(s) and completing the tasks within the agreed timeframe
* reviewing and approving the previous meeting’s minutes as a true and accurate record at the commencement of the next meeting
* complying with the requirements of confidentiality, code of conduct and conflict of interest set out in the following documents

#### Appointments

EWG members will be appointed via an expression of interest (EOI) process, with appointments based on merit and ensuring that the final EWGs have the right mix of knowledge, experience, and expertise. The selection criteria will be published with the EOI documentation.

EWG members attending meetings or participating in other network activities during their usual working hours at a Victorian public health service, will need to provide evidence of support from their employing organisation as part of the appointment process.

#### Chair

The EWG should elect a chair and a deputy from its membership.

The chair is responsible for:

* approving the agenda of each meeting before it is distributed by the secretariat
* guiding the meeting according to the agenda and time available
* ensure fairness and equality at the meeting
* inviting specialists/subject experts to attend meetings when required
* ensuring all discussion items end with a decision, action, or definite outcome
* confirming delegation of tasks to working group members
* reviewing and approving the draft minutes before distribution by the secretariat
* review and provide advice on any out of session papers
* has the final voting right to any contentious or unresolved issues.

#### Secretariat

The Guidance Team will provide the secretariat function for the EWG. This function will be overseen by the Guidance Team manager. The role of the secretariat is to:

* schedule meetings and notify group members of any scheduled changes with as much notice as possible
* preparing agendas and issuing notices for meetings, and ensuring all necessary documents requiring discussion or comment are attached to the agenda
* update, manage or log any potential conflicts of interest
* distributing the agenda and meeting materials 7 days prior to the meeting
* taking notes of proceedings and preparing minutes of the meeting
* distributing minutes to all group members within one week of the meeting.

#### Out-of-session resolutions

When an issue arises that, in the opinion of the chair, requires resolution before the next scheduled meeting, the chair may seek an out-of-session resolution. An out-of-session resolution shall be achieved and may be acted upon if:

* Written information about the issue, together with a proposed resolution, is distributed to all members of the committee.
* Sufficient members of the group to constitute a quorum respond within a timeframe agreed upon by the chair.

Tenure

EWG members will have a two-year term. The clinical lead, as an ex officio member, will have tenure for the period they hold the position of clinical lead.

Resignation as an EWG member will be in writing to the Chair, with a one month notice period.

Mid-term vacancies

Mid-term vacancies will be filled via an EOI process.

### Meeting Schedule

#### Quorum

* Attendance of half an EWG plus one member including via tele/videoconferencing will constitute a quorum.
* In the event a quorum is not achieved, the meeting may proceed with voting/decision making held over until such time as a quorum is achieved.
* Absent members cannot be represented by proxy.
* If an EWG agrees that specific expertise and/or organisational representation is needed to progress work against specific priorities, the governance committee Chair may co-opt members for a set period for that work. The role of the co-opted member is to contribute constructively to discussions and deliberations in the same way as other members. Co-opted members, however, do not have voting rights and will be required to declare any conflicts of interest and sign a confidentiality form.

Attendance

EWG members must attend no less than 75 per cent of meetings per year.

To support participation of people living in regional or rural locations, teleconference meetings via a Teams platform will be the preferred medium, with in-person meetings being the exception rather than the norm.

Meeting frequency

Meetings will be held monthly, with opportunity for additional meetings in the event of increased workload. Meetings will be a minimum of one and a half hours in duration or as otherwise determined by the chair. Subgroup meetings may be required and will be arranged at a time convenient to subgroup members

### Decision making

Decision making in the EWG will be on a consensus basis. In the event there is no consensus, a simple majority will suffice, with the Chair casting the final vote to reach majority if required.

### Confidentiality

All members will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement on commencement of their term of appointment.

Members will not reveal any confidential or proprietary information entrusted in the course of their duties.

Upon cessation of membership, and thereafter, the member shall not reveal any confidential or proprietary information that they obtained while a member of the committee, and may not use or retain, or attempt to use or retain, any such information, documents, or data.

Guests will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement prior to meeting attendance.

The Chair will provide direction to members on outcomes or recommendations that may be disclosed publicly.

### Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest will arise if a member’s personal interest (actual or perceived) conflict with their duties as a subcommittee member such that the person may not be independent, objective, and impartial in relation to their duties. All declarations of conflict of interest will be declared as part of the membership documentation, and where appropriate for additional circumstances in any given meeting.

Where a potential conflict of interest has been declared the member will remove themselves from voting on matters concerning the declared conflict and be guided by the chairperson on how to best proceed and advise the meeting accordingly. A formal declaration will be completed and signed along with documented action taken by the chairperson.

### Remuneration

Consumer members and private practitioners such as general practitioners will be eligible for remuneration for attendance to meetings.

All members, whether remunerated or unremunerated, are eligible to be reimbursed for reasonable out-of-pocket expenses such as travelling, accommodation, meals and other incidental expenses associated with attendance at meetings, overnight absence from home or absence from the normal work location during field duties.

EWG members should contact the manager of the guidance team for further information on remuneration and the processes for claiming expenses.

### Review and Amendments

The EWG will review its progress against its stated role and functions and the eHandbooks project plan as a standing agenda item. The Terms of Reference will also be updated accordingly.

Changes to the Terms of Reference will be subject to approval by the Director of Safety Insights program.

### EWG member list

To be completed once EWG appointed

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Name | Role | Contact Details |
|  |  |  |

## Attachment 1: Potential Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality

# Potential Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality

## All members of the Maternal and Neonatal eHandbooks (eHandbooks) Expert Working Group (EWG) are requested to complete this declaration prior to commencing EWG duties as described in the Terms of Reference.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

## EWG members must declare any potential personal, professional, or work-related conflict of interest:

* upon commencing involvement with the EWG, as applicable.
* where a matter giving rise to a potential conflict of interest is to be tabled at an EWG meeting, prior to the commencement of that EWG meeting.
* where a matter giving rise to a potential conflict of interest is raised during an EWG meeting, as soon as practicable during the committee meeting.

## A conflict of interest may include for example, where there may be possible financial gain for the member or their employing organisation through knowledge, decisions or information obtained as an EWG member of the eHandbooks project.

## In the event a committee member has declared a potential conflict of interest, the committee member must comply with the identified method of addressing any the conflict of interest (For example, by removing himself/herself from the committee meeting for the duration of any discussion regarding the matter giving rise to the conflict of interest). Any declared conflict of interest will be recorded in the minutes of the committee meeting.

## I ……………………………………………………. agree to disclose any potential conflict/s of interest and comply with the identified methods of addressing the conflict/s of interest as described above.

## Signed: …………………………………………… Date: ………………………………………………

## Attachment 2: Confidentiality Undertaking

# Confidentiality undertaking

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_hereby indicate that I understand and agree to abide by the confidentiality provisions set out in the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* governing the Victorian Maternal and Neonatal eHandbooks project.

I acknowledge that I must not directly or indirectly make a record of, divulge, or communicate to any person any information gained by or conveyed to me by reason of my office, employment, or engagement; or make use of the information for any purpose other than for the responsibilities expected of me as a member of the Maternal or Neonatal Expert Working Group.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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